



Lillian Wolf

## I'M A FRONTRUNNER

3 Gay Games, 4 Marathons, Retired Machinist, 72, Member Since 1990

**RUNNING** was not a way of life until my forties. Like many people at that age, I started running to stay healthy. I figure that running has helped with my longevity and good health. More importantly, I've met lots of people through running who I love, and it has really enriched my life. I love the camaraderie.

My first race was in 1981. It was a fluke. Before Front Runners formed, there was a 2-mile "Gay Race" down at West Potomac Park. I was running so badly that some of the women runners paced me at the end because it looked like I wasn't going to make it. But I was hooked on racing ever since that day.

I've finished four marathons—two in New York City and two in Washington—during the 1980s. My first one was the Marine Corps Marathon. I was 50 years old. You always remember the first one. At the end of the race, a Colonel said, "Ma'am, you've finished." I started to cry.

I like running long distances and I enjoy the challenge. I was not athletic when I was younger. I would never imagine that I could complete four marathons. Today, I still run outside 2-3 times a week.

I've been to three Gay Games—New York, Amsterdam and Chicago. I've won one silver and two bronze medals.



The Gay Games in New York City was my favorite. The closing ceremony at Yankee Stadium was really wonderful and overwhelming. New Yorkers were lots of fun. I wore my medal on the subway and total strangers would embrace me.

I like the idea that the GLBT community meets every four years to enjoy our sports. The Games are welcoming and not intimidating. Our own Team DC has a nice spirit, a very warm feeling. It's unifying.

"In Amsterdam, the Team DC guys called me 'Tiger Lil' because I'm still pretty lively for an old lesbian!"



The Games have changed since my first one. It's much slicker and a bit more political. While some of the political talk is fine, we always have to remember that we come to the Games for the love of sports.

I'm very slow. I placed last in the Chicago Games 5K. But, I got the biggest cheer of all at the finish line. People admire you for just getting out there. At my age, you can get a medal just by showing up!

This summer, I've been in too many races. I've even entered two races on a single weekend. However, I think I was overdoing it. Now I'm temporarily sidelined with sciatica and it was bothering me during the Chicago Games. I still decided to run in the 5K.

I'm planning to go to the 2010 Cologne Games. I like running too much to give it up. However, if I can't run when I'm 76, I can find another sport. Even if I have to learn how to play darts, I am going to Germany.

I say that you're never too old to have a good time and to keep your body moving. And you're never too old to be a Front Runner. ▼

Interview by Marcel Acosta